



CITY of NORTHAMPTON

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Northampton Board of Health Rescinds COVID-19 Mandatory Face Coverings in Public Places Policy

NORTHAMPTON - Effective May 6th, 2021, the City of Northampton Board of Health COVID-19 Mandatory Policies and Procedures for Wearing of Face Masks or Other Faces Coverings in Public Places in the City of Northampton will be rescinded. Face covering requirements will reflect those of the Commonwealth. These requirements and exemptions are as follows.

Face coverings will continue to be required at all times in the following situations and settings:

- Inside or waiting in line outside of grocery stores, retail stores, pharmacies, and restaurants
- Providing or using the services of any public or shared transportation, including taxis, ride shares (Uber, Lyft, etc), bus, train, plane
- Public streets and ways where physical distancing of at least 6 feet cannot be maintained
- Any location, including hotels, event venues, and private clubs, that hosts indoor or outdoor events or performances

Face coverings are optional in the following situations and settings

- Outdoors where at least 6 feet of distance from other people can be continuously maintained. This includes public parks, bike paths, walkways, and other outdoor settings where physical distancing is easily maintained. This does not include venues, hotels, and other businesses that host indoor or outdoor events.
- When communicating with someone who has a hearing impairment or other disability
- In specific circumstances, such as when eating or drinking in restaurants, receiving dental care, or participating in water sports and swimming
- In private outdoor and indoor settings, in small groups with members of the same household or non-household members

There are multiple considerations behind the decision to rescind the Northampton Face Mask Order. Notably, there has been significant decrease in case counts across the state and here in Northampton. While it is not time to become complacent by any means, more stringent face

covering requirements do not reflect the current status of transmission risk in the state or the municipality.

When ample physical distancing is maintained, the risk of transmission is significantly reduced outdoors. The largest drivers of spread are social gatherings, events, and other crowded settings indoors where distancing is difficult to maintain and the air is not as well-ventilated as it is outdoors. While not entirely impossible, it is statistically much less likely that the virus will spread between people who are outside and also distanced. For this reason, face masks are optional when outdoors and when able to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other people.

Of emphasis, as more of our population gains access to and obtains vaccination, we are progressively more protected against the virus. This added layer of protection is beginning to complement other measures such as mask-wearing, physical distancing, and staying home when ill. Vaccine eligibility has now expanded to everyone in the population who is 16 years and older. As of Sunday, May 2nd, approximately 2.6 million of our total population of 6.9 million were fully vaccinated and approximately 6.3 million vaccines have been administered in the state, including first and second doses. Vaccinations are our best protection against COVID-19 and our greatest tool in working towards completely eliminating the need for mask requirements and other restrictions at the statewide, nationwide, and global levels. Everyone is strongly encouraged to get the vaccine when it becomes available to them, even if they have previously recovered from COVID-19. To make an appointment for vaccination at the Northampton Senior Center go to <https://www.northamptonma.gov/2219/Vaccine-Clinics>.

For more information, please contact the Northampton Health Department at healthdept@northamptonma.gov or at (413) 587-1219